

Disfunctions in the large urban habitat Berceni – Bucharest

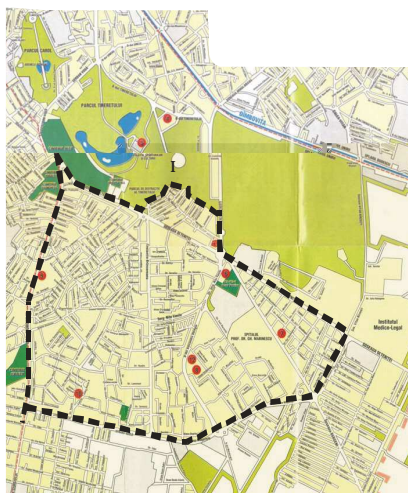
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The changes in the political regime and those connected with the mentality of Bucharest population have found the large urban habitats without any real support in the internal structuring and functionality. All the components of these urban structures were planned accordingly with the communist ideas of development: large assembly composed by block of flats, large industrial plants near the residential areas or even inside them, overly control in the population dynamics. In this situation, internal structure of habitats was unequipped from the new transformation point of view to come.

So, I tried to look over some dysfunctions of large urban estate, emphasized only the most problematic characteristics (those with the greatest potential of disrupting the fragile coherence of residential units from Bucharest). My paper is divided in three parts: the first, in which is depicted the history and evolution of large urban estate from Berceni area; the second focused on the main structural perspectives of this urban tissue. I sintetized some matters on the future of these urban tumours in the last part, but only on brief

Key words: *large urban habitat, Berceni, dysfunctions, urban renewal*

1. Introduction



The ensemble of blocks of flats of Berceni, better known as the Berceni neighbourhood, situated in the south-east part of the Capital, is one of the largest

human concentrations of the city (over 150 000 inhabitants). Concerning its situation, from the point of view of the functional areas of urban interest, the district of Berceni has a peripheral position, its initial purpose having been to supply human force for the industrial platforms. The modification in the governing system has left such great habitats to wither, as for fifteen years the urban renovation has been inexistent. However, its advantage is represented by its localisation in the length of the southern axis of city penetration, even though it is a bit out of centre towards the connection axis with Giurgiu, but open to communication with Oltenita and to the possibility to advantageously import agricultural resources from around the urban space, but the lack of preoccupation for a

proper integration according to the systematic-human principles has left the great habitats in general and the area of Berceni in particular in a little favourable position in the urban ensemble.

The history of the neighbourhood of blocks of flats of Berceni starts five decades ago, through the decision of the communist society to turn to the construction of pluri-family houses, most of them of medium height, following patterns imported from France and the Soviet Union (initially considered a success, but a great failure presently). The place in which it was built used to belong to the suburban communes Serban Voda, Aparatorii Patriei, Barzesti and also, included a big part of the vacant lands in the fourth district of the Capital. The process began in the period after 1920, when the demobilised from the First World War are being appropriated, or a series of lands are being bought by people with modest incomes. The old houses built up to 1950 are being replaced until 1960 with block of flats, especially towards the circulation arteries, the inside of the new “walls” guarding the same rural character; it determines isolation in the tissue, both functionally as aesthetically speaking.

As a reaction to the demands of labour force from the industrial platforms nearby, the phenomenon of population originating from other regions of the country “implantation” occurs, or the peasants from the neighbourhood are being drawn up (especially the ones with low economic situations), as the difference between the workers’ salaries and the ones of the peasants were decisive for the urban migration. Indirectly, through collectivisation, an available surplus of labour force necessary for achieving the industrial objectives. A new neighbour-

hood resulted, whose specificity is given by its functionality – district of blocks of flats, by its constructions’ (frontal) architecture and by the predilection of the work place. But if, from a functional point of view, we may still speak of the Berceni neighbourhood, through the appeal to the principles of spatial organisation, we will introduce in the analysis of the Romanian cities another category: **the great urban habitat**, which reflects all of the analysis aspects at an intra-urban level.

The great habitat of the Berceni area, along with other 19 such urban structures (I. Ianos 2001), contains a sum of specificities, out of which the following detach: urban tissue with over 2500 houses, the compactly built surface, state built and rented houses, houses with many levels.

The origin of the great habitats resides, therefore, in the industrialisation policy of the communist system – “moment of stagnation in the natural evolution of the city, but also, involution, and regress” (C. Iavoroschi 1999) – which necessitated units with a large number of employees. These industrial locations, with a high concentration of industrial machines in a certain space have favoured the setting up of the industrial platforms – primarily IMGB, for the present case, and the platforms from the Rahova-Progresului (Vulcan) area, respectively Jilava, secondarily. This is where the idea of developing a residential area in the close proximity emerged, in order to enhance the accessibility of the labour force towards the industrialised platforms, doubled, however, by the desire of city expansion, to occupy an important position in the European top, according to communist criteria (industry, numerous population, and blocks). The

order in the urban hierarchy was wanted to be a quantitative one, and secondarily a qualitative one, in Bucharest, 63.7% of the population presently living in large human habitats (I. Ianos 2001).

According to the nature of the built space (I. Ianos 2001), the great habitats respect the following typology: large habitats built in the urban spaces through demolition; large habitats built on free lands and identified with the city, large habitats built at the periphery of the built urban space, the great habitat of Berceni belonging to the last two genetic types.

Presently, after approximately 50 years from its setting up, the analysed structure has yet to find a defining structure, the obvious eclecticism being the effect of the interventions in the communist period. As a matter of fact, the impact of the economic restructuring and the degradation of the social situation - caused by the income shrinking - is generally remarked in the accentuated degree of depreciation of the present urban image over posed to the one of the past (I. Ianos 2001).

2. The dysfunctions in the urban system ensemble of Berceni - Bucharest

The generation of the elements with perturbation character in the great urban habitats represent the consequence of two types of approach of the intervention policy: the over solicitation and the passivity correspondent to the two regimes - the communist one, and the one based on capitalist relations one, respectively. Each of these have their own characteristics that allow the shaping of the elements favouring the development of the urban space, but also, the ones that have had and have an inhibitive po-

tential on the dynamic of the Bucharest city. In the ensemble of the great urban habitats in Bucharest two variants of the dysfunctions that have been determined by those interventions may be identified:

- a). visible / active dysfunctions
- b). latent / hidden dysfunctions

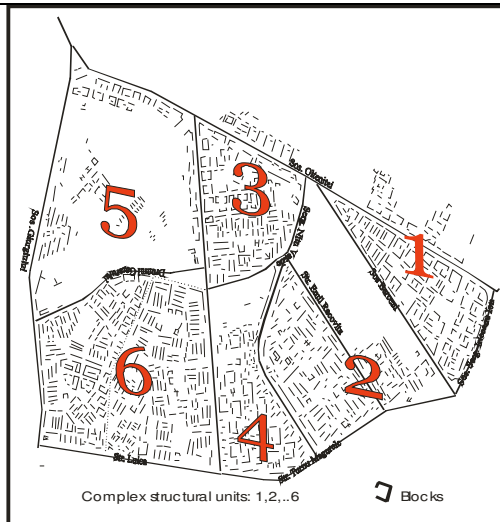
2.1. Visible dysfunctions

2.1.1. Structural and functional dysfunctions

2.1.1.1. The dysfunctions in the residential areas.

Bucharest has not suffered from fundamental changes of its urban structure until the beginning of the '50s, its expansion coming as a result of more or less big projects. Among these, we may include the succeeding dividing into parcels, meant to either grow the city beyond its limits, or to grow the density and fill in the holes inside it - generated by small county operations or by urban reasons of modernisation. (C. Iavoroschi 1999).

In order to occupy the inhabiting fond, people without adequate education from the diverse corners of the country and from the villages in the proximity of Bucharest were drawn to fill in the urban void. Afterwards, the flux towards the city is blocked through radical measures, destined to keep the balance, but the city had already been occupied with a population unfit to the urban conditions and requirements. This is why it is presently so difficult to change the mentality of many of the inhabitants of the Capital towards a more active participation to the administration of the locative spaces. Between the lacks of power of a certain generation, the lack of interest or conscience of another, the urban image is lacking the attention of its inhabitants.



Among the urban living structures, the diverse component microstructures are too little socially, economically and culturally integrated, the synergy emerging from their individuality favouring the accentuation of the elements with inhibitive potential at an urban development level. What may be remarked for these urban tissues are mostly, the aspects tied to the appearance period, and the type of houses rather than the functional and inter-human relations.

Defining for the functional composition of these great urban ensembles is the classification into complex structural units (sectors – neighbourhoods – micro-districts [complex urban units – proximity units]), which has imposed the allocation of the social-cultural endowments primarily taking into account geographical criteria, or even their integration without targeting the development potential of the habitats, minimising the ratio of the social aspects. The structural solution is characterised through the dense construction in the territory and through the lack of differences of the

spaces from the usage point of view (public/ domestic). This lead to:

- difficulties in stating the obligations of housing the residential unit (of the tenants, or of the local administration)
- some side effects on the people's psychology.

Therefore, there was an attempt to isolate the residences from the major circulation arteries in order to transform the territory into a great park, in which they could find their dwellings (Matei Adriana 1979). However, the building sites created for the new ensembles have lead to the appearance of many uncared for places or the degradation of the green spaces due to lack of interest, creating the so-called "grey spaces", which, through the minimisation of their initial functions, have deprived the tenants of the possibility to initiate social contacts. And the result of the communist attempts has resulted in the front of multiple level blocks, created especially along the circulation arteries. Their dominant position, beside the fact that it isolates, to a great extent, the inside of that urban complex unit, creates the impression of big urban trucks, divided into fragments by side streets.

The inside of the urban complex units is scattered with less than five floor blocks, enclosed by the great living factories. It is the case of many areas studied also, with the old remains of the suburban communes. These characteristics dominate the urban image, especially in the south and eastern parts of the Capital, which have been integrated into the urban ensemble from the posture of suburban communes, and the interest for the speeding up of the urban remodelling process has not been a keen one, as the

major interest was focused towards the central area.

The evolution of the great habitats has been somewhat stopped, once with the replacement of the communist regime, the following period being characterised by the lack of interest - especially in the first years - for the new approaches to integrate into the urban scenery these multileveled residence complexes, but also, by the neglect of the rural looking communities present, mostly into the tissues. Aside that these divide into fragments the territory in a chaotic manner and reduce the space availability, they produce visible ruptures, fact which increases the segregation from the analysed space. A separation is created, but at the same time, a deficient crossing between the urban and the rural, present, mostly in the mentality of the people and which impedes the habitats' restructuring.

Of course that under these circumstances (the rural aspect, minorities, streets "abandoned" by the municipal administration, the lack of the tenants' association, the interest only for the own residence, may it be in a block, or a house), the proper endowments have had very much to suffer, as their inexistence or their advanced degree of degradation was manifesting itself on the fond of the population's income reduction, as well as of the growth of the maintenance expenditures.

Through the dictatorial urbanisation policy, in the totalitarian period - "moment of stagnation in the natural evolution of the city, but also involution and regress" - a form of property, a sense of belonging to the city and a way of life very hard created have collapsed. Through the diminution of the individual value inside the lock forest, the man has been overwhelmed with the egalitarian

uniformity coming out of the buildings' aspect. (C. Iavoroschi 1999).

Right after 1990, the reduced cost of the flats and the lack of a proper legislation have allowed the reinstating of the proprietary statute, but in a new form. However, to this much differing from the initial one form, the modification of the mentality and the accentuation of the individualism through the import of the "Occidental crisis" is associated with new orientation fields towards an urban existence marked by the degradation of the buildings and of the surrounding spaces.

The stock of residences is another vital problem of the population living in the large habitats of Bucharest. The proportion of the rooms in the flats is a bit smaller than the number of the people living in them, as a consequence of the initial destination towards the young labour force, therefore young families - formed of a majority of workers - easily influenced by the pro-natal policy in the setting up period. This is why, presently, the apartments are insufficient for family inhabiting, as the large number of members create a supplementary discomfort to the general stress the block inhabitants are subjected to. The residences from these types of neighbourhoods are small, endowed with a minimum of comfort, in-block living being associated by the most people, with an ordeal, few people considering that they have a satisfying situation. The fact of the matter is that the block is a convenient alternative because, in the opinion if most of its inhabitants, it offers a lack of responsibility and reduced expenditures, but compensated by the lack of intimacy, a higher nervous consumption, a degradation of the housing sense, the problem of car parking, the lack of adequate agreement spaces and a minimum degree of safety. All these offer

the sensation of “macabre” collectivism (as a respondent stated it - questionnaire in the Berceni area, 2001).

Another problem is given by the quality of the buildings in its ensemble. The necessity of building more and more blocks determined the using of cheap materials, whose usage and quality is reflected in the aspect and structure of the residence ensembles. Therefore, the massive introduction of the great construction panels from the late '60s and their usage throughout the entire communist period, presently determines a diminution of the general quality of the residence stock. According to the classification of the type of material used for the outside walls, Bucharest has known an intense usage of bricks and concrete, but the data reflects only a general level, and therefore, I was not able to realise a differentiation on the types of usage.

After 1995, the forming of the new classes of opportunists and the lack of interest manifested by the mayors concerning urban integration of the different location areas has allowed the appearance of the villas, one of the floors in the “urban tree”. These have been and still are built not following an urban plan, but according to the financial potential and relations of the owner. The villas have started to be inserted shyly, at first, in the places of the old houses remained from the times when they were integrated to the suburban communes, but then, more and more, through the occupation of the green spaces which were, as they were, insufficient, or through the obtaining of approvals for the building among green spaces. However, at the level of the great habitats, they are not that numerous, the main obstacle being the limited stock of space. They create, however, a contrasting image to the massive and

compact blocks, offering the grounds for the diversity of the constructions' scenery, but also, the roots of a segregate mentality, developed by the inhabitants of the blocks, due to the obvious contrast.

The amalgam present in the great urban habitats, instead of promoting a positive competition which could diminish some of the initial effects, determines inside each tissue (individual or collective) ruptures and dichotomies on all levels from the districts. The observation scale, like visualising a fractal may be enhanced, but the problems appeared are the same, the variations being due to the specific nuances and relations.

The spatial insularity of the residences - no matter the floor we stand on - is occupied, therefore, by tall blocks and much too crowded for the actual usage boulevards and roads. The rigidity of the limits represented by the circulation arteries favour the isolation, and finally, the separation of a tissue from another, meaning the involution of the system towards death (seen as a negative phenomenon). Therefore the infiltrations in the depth of the residential organism are weak and visually or functionally unsustained by positive elements (Anemarie Constantinescu-Strihan 1999), the degree of entropy diminishing, as stated above.

2.1.1.2. Dysfunctions among the industrial areas

2.2 The industrial areas

The policy of growth of the number of people in the cities, implicitly, the endowment of a privileged position to the Capital has been realised due to the centralised plan of forced reduction of the ratio of inhabitants from the rural area, disregarding the future conse-

quences. To this, we may add the belief that industry is the promoting factor of urban development, and especially, of the communist society.

The case of the urban habitat of Berceni represents one of the multiple interventions of the sort when for the functioning of the industrial areas created at the periphery of the city, multilevel residence ensembles have been built. And for the coverage of the residence fund, people without adequate education were drawn from all over the country, as well as from the neighbouring villages, only to fill the urban void. Normally, the inadequacy to the new life medium is felt presently, and for at least one generation more.

Next to the centralised decision, one of the most important factors that have determined the existence of the great habitat of Berceni is the I.M.G.B. industrial platform, placed at the limit of the district. Its construction began three years prior to the one of the residence blocks, in 1962, the influx of financial capital and human energy increasing in the following years. It effected the systematisation of Bucharest through the setting up of the great residence area in the Berceni area, doubled by the extension of the subway region, including the afferent stations and the creation of new transport lines both intra-urban and around the city, as well as through the building of the I.M.G.B. house of culture.

Inside the great habitat of Berceni, two industrial units are the ones that nuance the urban space and may produce perturbations of the subsystem: AMIRO S.A - medical equipment and Berceni S.A. - pastry products. These, however, are part of the light industry and sustain, through their products, the population of the area and of the medical centres in the

proximity; their degree of integration into the municipal administration ensemble of the area being, in a great part, the one that creates problems. There may also be mentioned the small industrial units of the private managers in the Resita and Sura Mare areas (specialised in meat products). There is also the factory from Oltenitei, at the south-eastern edge of the habitat, Romprim S.A. - Diesel engines.

Per ensemble, under the circumstances of economic poorness of the current life (2001), many of the great industrial spaces of the area have lost part of their commercial power, this reality reverberating towards all other levels of urban life (A. Strihan 1999). Through this, the auxiliary functionality of the habitat - of labour force support for the industrial platforms has diversified, the connection with the genetic factor being no longer, an essential one, and conferring a relative independence to its inhabitants. The current interventions in those areas need to solve the old problems.

The rigidity of the residence neighbourhoods being causing a lot of discomfort to their inhabitants and an internal macrostructure marked by major industrial locations determine a difficult future development through planning of the cities. The perspective of the integration of the industrial structures into the urban context accentuated by the functional and physiognomic ruptures through the creation of microstructures with specific functions and the finding of architectonic solutions is a major imperative of the future urban restructuring.

2.1.1.3. Dysfunctions at the tertiary areas' level

The function of the great habitats as residence space for the inhabitants of the Bucharest city has been the only one

whose implementation was fully realised, however, disregarding the fact that its presence is conditioned by other secondary supporting functions. Next to the residential function, the industrial one nearly covered the entire spectre of urban inhabitancy. Therefore, the two functions were seen as the main pillars of urban development in Bucharest, as the endowments for free time spending, as well as the ones for social-cultural activities were neglected - elements with destabilising potential, in the view of the former leading structures.

The sudden changes at the level of the great urban habitats of the Capital force the internal system to remediate the functional ruptures of the previous period. Shyly at first, but more impetuously afterwards, the economic activities are the ones that intervene among the functional niches in order to cover the existent deficit. Initially, their presence was a chaotic one, manifested, also, as a dysfunction due to the improvised character and not oriented toward the target; afterwards, once with the structuring of the political and economic relations, the activities among the great habitats have started a sedimentation process in accordance to the their coverage power. If initially, the disorganised and negatively impacting activities of the small managers were the most numerous ones, presently, the supermarket or even hypermarket chains set their mark on the economic function from the habitats.

The presence of the tertiary activities in the urban living complexes support the relatively normal functioning of the great habitat through the larger offer of jobs, the stimulation of the local economy, and the localisation of the services according to the demand and of the offer (to the extent to which this is possible).

The first steps were timidly realised right after 1990, and when it was possible, the commerce has degenerated between 1994 and 1998 in the multitude of lodges and booths, badly maintained shops and the providing of weekly qualitative products to most institutions, state owned. Normally, the lack of concurrence in various areas, the monopole of the state in the most important services and their corroboration with old mentalities have made possible a sum of negative events, whose settlement met many difficulties ("the lodge owners' protest").

Step by step, both the basic services, as well as the special ones have gained power on the fond of concurrence accentuation, but the morass of the political and social ambiguities has lead to an unhealthy development, the main beneficiaries - the inhabitants - being to this day treated without respect.

a. Basic Services

Attention must be drawn towards some elements - the appearance, along the pavements and in the main intersections of a diversity of booths and lodges improvised in order to pursuit commercial activities has been realised in the fond of the lack of certified endowments and of the necessary field reserves (Constantin Enache 1998), to which the mentality change, from excess of planning in the previous period, as opposed to the liberty understood as anarchy, has added.

- The presence, or almost five years of the second-hand stores, and of the pawn-shops express the lack of an adequate functioning of the shops in the great urban habitats, on the fond of economic poorness of the inhabitants, aiming, especially the middle-inferior population segment.

- The appearance of large private shops has responded to the street

retail commerce, but the small prices the small shops, the mix lodges offer, allow them still to survive even if the products are not qualitative.

- The dividing into fragments of the small shops situated along the circulation arteries, at the higher than five levels blocks' ground floor seems to be a viable solution for the time being, the accessibility and the price being settled in a balanced ratio, as a consequence of the localisation in apartments or of the reduced price of the former state owned shops. Without a territorial continuity, but with a localisation given by the possibilities and less by the attractive form, these shops belonging to the small managers are sensible to the economic oscillations, their existence period being relatively small.

- Other available services among the private chain are the health ones: chemist's shops, small private clinics, and dental clinics. They are not always at the normal standards, but their appearance is the result of even worse problems in the state sector they try to compensate.

- The growth in the number of vehicles has reverberated immediately in the multitude of gas stations and vulcanisation units that stud nearly all important arteries, modifying the pedestrian flux and the aesthetical aspect of the street.

b. Special Services

A big problem of the great urban habitats has appeared due to the lack of an efficient space organisation, the living ensembles representing only residential spaces, without a proper support at the level of the services. Their image is that of urban factories, who lack the possibility to beneficiate of all adequate finishing

operations for their products. Therefore, through the absence of the special services, the inhabitants had and still have in some areas, to walk for considerable lengths in order to cover their requirements. The bizarre situations the inhabitants found themselves in order to appeal to the medical or educative services with a higher degree of complexity are still present. High schools, hospitals, administrative units and other such services providing institutions have been concentrated only in some areas, mostly central ones, without requiring those locations. As such, it has arrived to that situation in which in the great habitats the presence of services represents a rare fact, and the distribution of the urban transportation network complicates even more the unwinding, under acceptable terms of the inhabiting process.

On the fond of the changes in the economic needs, after 1990 the special services have started to appear among the habitats, but at a punctual level, and only there where the attraction power of a habitat allowed it. This is why the most dynamic, under this aspect, were the banking services that have been inserted in the land areas. They have been especially distributed along the major circulation arteries that allow the strong directing of the financial capital force and the concentration of adjacent services. The banks are especially concentrated there where the process of unwinding of the financial actives is at the maximum: markets, chains of shops, and crossroads with important commercial objectives. These three locations are present, no matter the habitat, the bank power alone representing an element of differentiation from this point of view.

The other special services more important for the existence of the great

habitats, respectively the educative and health ones have known other characteristics. They have appeared point-like, with private capital contribution, according to which they have gained their bigger or smaller importance at the level of the habitat, but also of the neighbouring ones. We may therefore, mention the Informatics School among the Dristor habitat or the private universities of Spiru Haret and Dimitrie Cantemir, or the medical and legal centres located according to the space and cost availability. Their distribution is determined by costs, not by attractiveness or interest potential as in the case of the banks. However, these services also, have begun to gain force, as the initial small and later on greater competition have made possible the development of quality services which are now directly competing with the state ones.

Generally, in order to revitalise these areas a new direction that must be followed is the one of relocating the services and promoting the centres with reviving and redirection of the urban course power.

2.1.1.4. Dysfunctions among the special areas

One of the severe problems of the Romanian cities after 1990 is undoubtedly, the degradation and the diminishing of the existing green spaces. The superficiality with which the cities' administrators, as well as the inhabitants approach this problem is to the least, worrying. At a central level, there where settlements and laws are being conceived and, theoretically, their appliance is ensured and supervised, one may say that the problem is to the least, ignored. This statement could be contradicted by the existence of legislation acts issued in this period.

However their effect is practically null. (Gabi Pascariu 2000)

Why do these happen? Because a space occupied only by trees looks unprofitable in the eyes of the people that see income sources everywhere. There should be, if not a New York hotel sized bank, then at least a gas station, a fast-food or a small bar - at the best- because, in the end, we are managers. Anything, as long as it produces money and we imitate the American style. But the fact is that here, things don't go like over there. Here, things go worse than in the country side, with all our efforts to get gold out of the poor parks which only did their duty to produce a little oxygen. (Manuela Babescu).

The lack of uniformity in the distribution of the green spaces among Bucharest has lead to the situation in which certain areas have close values to the imposed standards, but are conditioned by the presence of large green spaces at the edge of the habitats and not by the existence among diverse recreation areas. The reality offers another image. Excluding the great parks and referring to the real habitats, we conclude that the presence of the oxygenised surfaces is almost a null one. This does not mean that the green spaces do not exist, but that the creation of special surfaces to ensure the specific functions is not adequate. The necessity of solving the problem of the green spaces is felt by the population, requiring a faster implementation of this sort of category. The problem of the green spaces results from the thickly built urban surface, the squares, or the insufficient small green spaces in front of the residences. As a fact of the matter, the lack in continuity of the green spaces is obvious, the exceptions from the few

more favoured Racovita areas confirming the rule.

In accordance to the recent studies concerning the social and mental aspects of urban life, the placement of the green spaces takes into consideration the walking period towards and from the green spaces. And among the great urban habitats, the value of 15 minutes as an environment quality indicator is not uniform, the concluding heterogeneity manifesting itself on all levels. As a matter of fact, the accessibility and quality of the available green spaces is much more important than their size, a totally opposed aspect at the Capital's level.

The lack of specific recreation areas is not compensated by the presence of recreational parks, because the served area is very wide, covering in some cases, the surface of two districts (the Tineretului Park, the Carol Park).

If until now, we have referred to the recreational function of the green spaces in the habitats, the function of protection curtain that they should have is practically inexistent. The presence of big polluters in the area, even at the edge of the habitats, and sometimes inside them, which do not have the realised impact studies, constitutes an important stress factor and a perturbation element of the quality of the urban life. Under the circumstances in which the green spaces must diminish the pollution values, their projection is not efficient, and their realisation is absolutely lacking. The international norms are flagrantly disrespected and these have quite severe repercussions on people's health.

The pollution along the canyon-streets takes place primarily – excepting the traffic part of the street – in the area of the sidewalk and of the residential spaces situated in the close proximity of

the circulation artery. All big circulation arteries, with an intense traffic should dispose of green spaces settlements along them (street alignments, gardens and squares), in order to face the traffic conditions. But the utopia we desire is becomes bigger, as the pedestrian traffic (unprotected by the green spaces) is allocated to the great extent according to the road one; we may observe the lack of organisation degree in the urban planning.

The organisation of the oxygenised surfaces in a society with high values shows the degree of civilisation, but the urban ideal with many inhabitants, factories and industries, of the communist society had other plans.

The deficit of green spaces, characteristic not only to the great habitats, but also in general, to the Capital (some small exceptions) has been “built” through the destination change of some existent spaces and their allocation for the construction of buildings (p+5), as well as through the progressive diminish over the past few years, of the green spaces, due to lack of maintenance or illegal constructions. The declared green space fond is much diminished, both by surface as from a biological point of view, a new category appearing in the spotlights – the grey spaces.

All of these profoundly affect both the aesthetic aspect of the great habitats but especially the lack of the green spaces considerably diminishes the health genesis of its people, an element whose importance is too little taken into consideration by the responsible factors.

2.1.1.5. Dysfunctions regarding the circulation areas

For a quite long time, the function of the great urban habitats has been that to accommodate the labour force – this is

where the “multi-family residence neighbourhood” comes from -, the people’s fluxes between them and the industrial/commercial areas being supported by the deficient transportation system both, locally and regionally.

The setting up of the “living factories”, along the great arteries is highlighted also by the transportation network which follows, to a great extent, the collector arteries. The majority of the streets appear as impenetrable axes limited by closed barriers of multi levelled blocks (p+5) (Annemarie Strihan 1999). The peripheral and longitudinal position in the habitat of the collector roads is not completed, as it normally should among a network (if we were to follow the correct sense – etymology of the word) of penetrations into the urban tissue and nearly not at all by transversal ties. Everything has a peripheral importance (district at the edge of the city) materialised, therefore, also by the transportation system, the distance between relatively close locations being a detouring one; the continuity is interrupted by obstacle small roads and the lack of the transportation means.

In a centralised system it is only normal for economies to prime before quality in order to fulfil the working plans, and the population must get by under the circumstances of the insufficiency of transportation means and being late on the job.

The replacement of the old system has not modified to a great extent the look of the transportation network, but from the point of view of the appearance of second hand carriages from the trams and of the buses of the same sort “imported” from Germany or France. The secondary character that it plays in the urban system is reflected also by the local covering old buses and trolleys, the mod-

ern auto park belonging to the connection lines with the centre. The keeping of the initial features of the network, the growth in the population number, the freedom of choosing the workplace, the growth in the number of vehicles and the agglomeration of certain special services, may it be in the area (the hospitals), either their translation to the centre, determines in the hours of great traffic, true “mobile packages” on the roads and in the transportation means.

The concentration of the transportation lines along the great circulation arteries generates a maximum amount of stress when, in the most cases, the phonic and air pollution, the traffic and the lack of space combine. The quality of urban life in such situation is severely affected, the respondents wanting, in their vast majority, a change and due to the transportation (although they do not explicitly express it).

The obvious chaos cannot be solved that easily because it would mean the penetration of the block wall, and other solutions based on the existent roads – much too small – impose the circulation only of the means of common transport. And other consequences, in appearance, latent ones, may emerge with unpredictable consequences, augmenting the degree of dysfunction.

The enhanced importance the inner streets have is not fully profited from, as the lack of objectives (destroyed) and of the services reflecting itself in the unknowing of the urban interior and spatial isolation.

Socially, the street is a communitarian space, the fond for any urban scenery, which would mean that the residences should be reoriented towards a common driveway, doubled by specific objectives, and not towards the great pol-

luting arteries (Kevin Lynch, 1962). As a matter of fact, the parallelism between the pedestrian space and the street leads to a maximum pollution, as the passers by must wait for the transportation means in tram rests inhaling a maximum pollution level in the early hours of the day when the concentration of the harmful agents is at a maximum and the traffic is overcrowded.

The population flux and its concentration towards the major intersections is inefficiently valued, as the interest pole these represent have yet to draw the attention of the potential investors (only carburant companies).

Even if the complexes destined to be the centre of vitality of these areas are inhabited, to a great extent by the inhabitants of those particular habitats, their association to the notion of centraliser does not hold water. The satisfying of basic functions and the placement in the most important intersection is too little exploited from, the offered potential by the street structure being here, as in many other cases, improperly used.

Our opinion expressed the idea that the week valorisation was due to the deficient urban projects, presently, the improvement of the public transportation towards the centre of the city being an imperative.

2.2. Latent dysfunctions

2.2.1. The segregation and the social issues

The double conditioning of the intra-urban space (exogenous: by the competition dynamics and new processes and strategies of firms' relocation and from the inside, through the specific dynamics and conditions) generates an essential problem: is it more important to study the social disparities among the intra-

urban space, or should we just ignore them under the pretences that the limits of this space are not rigorous enough because they are arbitrarily traced and not on the basis of scientific criteria or the problem is hard to quantify due to the lack of statistics. Anyone knows the limits of the administrative delimitation of the space and the associated information, but despite these limits, the information may reveal important aspects of the social disparities.

The urban spaces suffer from the most intense transformation processes in a very short time. The mutations resulted in the periods in which they can barely find their coherence, after they have made a new passing, favour the appearance of social ruptures and tensions. In the attempt to adapt the internal parameters to the macro-structural requirements of the urban space, the neighbourhoods, and in general, the living spaces have the tendency to shut their limits, to isolate themselves from the rest of the community. The phenomenon is acute there where the human origins and characteristics of those habitats' inhabitants are similar.

From another point of view, the growth in the mobility has allowed the superior classes to search for new options, to avoid the social problems through the choice of the preferred community and implicitly, of the residence space, and therefore create clubs and exclusivist territories (A. Loukaitou-Sideris, T. Banerjee, 1996).

The rejection of the others appears as inherent, under the circumstances in which the desire of new, of retransformation of the old structures is viewed as a danger. Therefore, the inhabitants from these closed (not totally, because that would be a theoretical model) spaces will

seek to make their own internal organisation and will impose a new power pole. The power pole of the unstructured space will directly compete with the superior power, and, as any newcomer, will seek to impose itself as soon as possible. This is why the closed, unstructured spaces are looked upon as a tumour of the urban space because they tend to divide the order, the expansion, and the urban spaces have the tendency to positively evolve and not regress towards the rural media.

However, not only the isolation from the others through the rejection of the innovations leads to social and spatial ruptures, but also the lack of a power pole – landmark at the scale of a community or society – which allows not a closing, but on the contrary, an unlimited opening. Some places seem shut, but, in fact, they lack the centres and limits the centres could have determined. The decomposed, disaggregated place has the same inertia as the place firmly shut between barriers (Annemarie Strihan 1999).

Therefore, the limit, in the urban context is not only a helping element for tracing some borders, with or without a purpose, but also serves to the establishment of a social solidarity and conflict feeling. Its complete desegregation leads to the loss of the security sensation and of the feeling of belonging to a community and to a place. The total opaqueness of the limit determines the lack of communication discomfort, of the lack of an understanding regarding living together between the two parts of the limit.

The cause of the first type of segregation is the absence of landmarks, which would induce movement, translation-communication tendencies; the cause of the second type is the impossibility of communicating with the exterior,

the inexistence of the necessary exchanges in order to establish a balance state with the environment. The both situations have the same extreme finality; the inertia and disappearance of the place as a form, in the urban context.

The social problems bear many faces, but mainly, can be reduced to the same factor, and that is the economic level. The lower it is the more reduced the possibilities to integrate the new changes. People have limited communication opportunities with the other inhabitants from the neighbouring habitats, and therefore, create their own interest centres, as a response to the immediate un-intervention of the coordinating power.

3. Urban restructuring

Instead of being viewed as a process, the problem, the current city is disputed as a thing, as a reproducible object. It is no longer integrated into the dynamic cycle it is part of, and becomes utopia, a fantasy whose image excludes people and takes into consideration only the structural elements of the urban medium. This is why the role of the city planners is a delicate one, at the time in which the interventions on the habitats take place, primarily having to take into consideration the quality of the inhabitancy and the insurance of the long-term development of the settlement.

The most difficult problem the urban planning specialists from Romania are confronting is represented by the way to integrate large habitats into the urban space. The present tendencies seem to programme the finality of this action into a far away future, the consequence of the multiple problems to which the urban management is confronted (table no.1).

The high rate of unemployment, the inertia of some mentalities which still exist after more than ten years from the collapse of the former regime, the economic

difficulties and the low income of the residing population of the great habitats deter the remodelling task

Table no.1. Problems of the urban management

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Physical | Errors of projection, construction, structure, the type of the used materials The usage of the utility infrastructure The lack of the social contact chambers The lack of equipment and neglect of the spaces from the proximity of the buildings The very big density of the buildings |
| Political | The State is no longer involved in insuring the quality of the residences |
| Social | The systematic breaking of the internal rules The lack of the communitarian spirit Criminality The growth of the social disparities and the spatial segregation |
| Economic | Recession Low incomes High inflation/ reduced economies The high rate of unemployment |
| Institutional | The lack of interest from the proper organs The lack of communication of the necessities Control intersection |
| Organisational (urban planning) | The lack of models and concepts for restructuring The approach of the small steps Contradictions between the urban planning objectives and the political ones |

The difficulty of urban restructuring the intervention among the great habitats implies resides mainly in the lack of funds to sustain the potential projects; however these do not exist, or are low shaped. Even more, the general interest for these urban aggregates is no longer as high as in the post revolutionary years, in which the rapid privatisation of the apartments in the great habitats has generated important funds, whose utilisation has been wrongly applied. As a matter of fact, the interest for the large habitats is reflected very well in the selling price of the apartments (diminished with approximately 30% as opposed to 1992), the high costs of maintenance of the residences determining the population to find new residencies, either cheaper in the rural medium, either to build immobile units in the areas around the cities.

The decentralisation of the services concentrated in the central part of the city and the development of the intra-urban poles imply a new approach of urban restructuring and a new attempt to remodel the spaces occupied by the large habitats. The restructuring of the industrial properties neighbouring the great habitats, as well as the stock of available space it offers may be used as niches to create new urban elements in order to attenuate the physiognomic disruptions of the urban scenery.

Even though it has been tried to uniform the urban tissues in the peripheral areas, the necessary costs and the movements the spaces had to suffer could not allow the realisation of the initial purpose. In these habitats it has been reached to a separation pushed to the extremes between inhabiting, work and rec-

reation, ideas which are presently long gone on the urban horizon.

We must think that any futuristic innovation of the present may be unconsidered by the society of the future – at its time, as any other attempt, apparently inopportune today, to become a success in time. This is what happened to the great urban habitats whose idea in the '60s seemed to remediate the encountered dysfunctions (space, numerous people, and costs).

We may observe a multitude of urban aspects in these tissues represented, therefore, by the human, architectural and functional diversity. What is important, however – the inhabitants of this area must deal entirely with the faults of the former regime, but also of the newer ones. And the strong points of the former regime strongly reverberate, as the people seem to see a fundamental idea very little: they are especially the ones that must involve themselves in the habitat's restructuring.

The large are the blocks of flats cover, the numerous people of the residential districts and the limited financial means of the community make it extremely difficult to integrate such structures into the modern urban ensemble, capable to offer an improved comfort and an attractive urban image (I. Ianos 2001). The impact of the economic restructuring and the degradation of the social situation of the population - caused by their diminished incomes – are remarked in the degree of urban image depreciation, in general (I. Ianos, 2001).

The restructuring of the great habitats must start from the idea of urban reintegration into the geographical space. The creation of the optimum ties between areas and the extension of the cities along the main access ways towards

the peri-urban space may diminish the negative effects caused by the accentuated degradation of life and of the physical medium from the great urban habitats (I. Ianos 2000).

3.1. The revivalism of the great habitats – desire or failure?

The disaggregating of the hierarchical and relation structures based on a partially controlled by the decision centre normal evolution has materialised through the imposing of a new development road and the decision to confer a new image to the urban space of Bucharest. The image built according to the industrial organisation model in which the role of the secondary sector is the dominant one and pushes forward the ulterior development of the city, was in the case of Bucharest, as in the case of any other similar centres, a total failure.

Living inside not esthetical blocks, comfort-less and sometimes with important problems regarding the necessary endowments, the high density of the buildings generated by the necessity of replacing the old suburban components integrated now to the city and the planning of the relations according only to the industrial spaces, and later one, to the civics' centre, all these have shaped into an image profoundly repulsive and the alienation of the inhabitants of those structures.

Seen as a way out of the crisis period that followed the Second World War, the migration towards the great city has attracted a poorly prepared population as to the requirements of the urban life and much too less prepared for the new industrial projects that were about to be implemented. The mentality of the newcomers in the urban medium and the ideological propaganda promoted in the

first years of “socialist reconstruction” have functioned without too many troubles; the state offered jobs with a salary level much higher than the one in the urban space to which we may add the offer of residences, while drawn the population was less than content with the new conditions. In time, however, the rural-suburban behaviour has suffered very few modifications, so that some blocks from the great habitats could be compared with vertically disposed villages.

The breaking of the barriers and the loose legislation that followed in the ‘90s has shaped a declining city, without personality and having a lot of problems, one more severe than the other. And maybe the most important problem that arose on the fond of the new freedoms the population was apprehending is the crisis of the residences, under its three forms:

- a). the insufficient number of free apartments as opposed to the existent demand;
- b). the quality of the residences;
- c). the growth of the maintenance costs.

The possibility to buy the residence in the first years was considered a very profitable favour, but, after a while, at more then 10 years from the change in the property form (state - private), we may remark the gravity of this situation, in ensemble. Once passed into the private owned form, the apartments among the great residence ensembles have been used as goods of which the proprietary fully disposed, and absolutely no interest was paid to anything outside the own surrounding space. Isolated at the level of the apartments, their inhabitants have showed too little interest for the general quality of the entire ensemble they live in. If in the previous period, the lack of in-

terest was due to the lack of belonging, now, the phenomenon is generated by a too big individuality.

The interruption of the continuity for the administration and improvement of the great living structures has much diminished the effective life of these ensembles, the results being blocks with more and more problems in the aesthetics and structure. The problem of the residences has been more accentuated by the withdrawal of the support the state had offered as well as by the exaggerated individualism in managing them, and even more by the growth of the maintenance costs and the diminishing of the living standard of the population.

The current conditions outline a city in which life among the great habitats becomes more and more difficult, and the alienation of the people becomes higher and higher; the few options headed towards the improvement of living and the revival of the ensembles are stopped by the same sickening mentality that limits the action freedom.

Marked by the inefficient duality of intervention (the local authority is too less involved, and the inhabitants are too preoccupied with solving their own surviving needs), the great urban habitats of Bucharest constitute themselves as declining structures on the road of urban evolution.

In the context of the successive crisis through which the great urban habitats have gone (the uniformity of the social life, the deterioration of the economic climate), the causes determining the current situation are based on three directions:

- a) the inefficient placement of the physical and human resources through the lack of some and the massive concentration of others;

b) the need of freedom, restrained both by the social regime as well as the living inside a block, but currently transformed in individualism and lack of care;

c) the excessive importance given to the secondary sector of the economy and the depending relation between it and the vitality of the habitats.

The few progresses made through the appearance of new services and the reorientation of the economies at a small scale towards the demand are isolated and do not have the power to pull out of the crisis these structures of the urban space. And maybe the crisis could be controlled if it were accepted at an administrative level. Although it is obvious, the lack of the intervention programmes and the absence of some strategies meant to direct the habitats towards an efficient self-organisation are the main causes of the decline. But the crisis is seen by the central and local structures only in critical cases for their own existence that is among the electoral periods. In these cases, a multitude of plans appear, whose principles are, mostly, utopian, taking into account only the political side and the winning of electoral capital as it has happened the moment the exchange of property was liberalised.

And, therefore, the inhabitant of the great habitats dreams more and more to a return towards the rural-like life, in which one could dispose of an individual residence integrated to the urban medium, with the possibility to breed animals and to take care of a small garden. These fantasies determined by the rural mentality, unchanged by the time passing, or by the affinity for individuality are not just simple ideas of the need for modernisation according to the models of the developed countries, but rather a special

form resulted from the post-socialist cultural hybridisation. (Manicke-Gyöngyösi 1995, apud H. J. Bürkner)

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